
Media Note

United States Imposes Import Restrictions to Protect the Cultural Heritage of Iraq

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

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The Department of State is pleased to announce that pursuant to statutory and Presidential delegated authorities, an import restriction has been imposed by the Department of Homeland Security on cultural heritage material from the Republic of Iraq. The restriction becomes effective today, April 30, 2008, upon publication in the *Federal Register* of the Designated List of restricted categories of material.

The import restriction is imposed under the Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act of 2004, which confers upon the President the authority to make emergency determinations under the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act with respect to any archaeological and ethnological material of Iraq. Acting under Presidential delegated authority, the Department made the necessary statutory determinations including that the subject material is a part of the remains of a particular culture or civilization, the record of which is in jeopardy from pillage, dismantling, dispersal, or fragmentation that is, or threatens to be, of crisis proportions. The depredation to the national patrimony of Iraq due to pillage and the unauthorized export of that country's cultural property has been extensively documented.

The import restriction applies to any cultural property of Iraq, including objects of ceramic, stone, metal, glass, ivory, bone, shell, stucco, painting, textile, paper, parchment, leather, wood, and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, or religious importance illegally removed from Iraq since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 on August 6, 1990. Such material may not be imported unless accompanied by documentation that it was exported from Iraq prior to that date. The Designated List can be found at <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop>.

Agriculture, cities, writing, temples, trade, warfare, the state, empire, libraries, art, and science all developed and flourished throughout Iraq's rich succession of ancient and Islamic cultures. Iraq's archaeological and heritage sites are the archive of this unique history, the study of which, despite generations of scholarship, has only begun. The U.S. import restriction is intended to reduce the incentive for pillage in order to better preserve Iraq's cultural heritage for present and future generations.